CALENDAR

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The ancient Yakut divided the year into lunar months (*yi-syl*). According to Jonov, one year (*tögürüksyl*) in our calendar was regarded as two years: spring and summer were counted as one year and fall and winter as another. Consequently, the time count in old Yakut traditions is much confused. For example, after two years in our count had passed, the Yakut may have said that four years had elapsed. The month was divided into two sections. The first half, until full moon, was called "the new" (*sañata*); the second half, following the full moon, "the old" (*ärgätä*). The days in the first half of the month are enumerated regularly from one to fifteen; in the second half, they are counted in reverse order, from fifteen to one. Thus, there are two fifteenth days in the month, one at the end of the first half and another at the beginning of the second half. Some moments in the phases of the moon are poetically defined; for instance, of the first day of the first half of the month, the Yakut say: *kys jaxtar kylamanbin kurduk kylbayan taxsŷta*, it glistened like the eyelash of a young girl; of the twenty-eighth day (the Yakut second day of the second half of the month) they say: *xotun jaxtar ylarhatyn iämähin saha ärgičiyä baranyta*, it ends like the size of a woman's earring.

The month, the Yakut say, has exactly thirty days. When asked how many months there are in a year, they usually answer: twelve. But this is difficult to compromise with their actual method of reckoning, since, were this so the *ot-yya* (hay month) would, during certain years, fall in winter. This is impossible. There are some corrections. It appears that the Yakut have more than twelve month names. They use the names for the twelve months in the following order:—

1. *Balyk ŷr*, Fish is spawning
2. *Bäs yya*, Month of pine, when its bark easily detaches itself
3. *Ot yya*, Month of hay
4. *Törduŋyŭ*, The fourth
5. *Bäsinyi*, The fifth
6. *Alnyy*, The sixth
7. *Sätinyi*, The seventh
8. *Axsynyy*, The eighth
9. *Toxsuny*, The ninth
10. *Olunyu*, The tenth
11. *Kulun tutar*, The foal he catches
12. *Mäs ustar*, The ice drifts

The New Year according to our calendar falls about the end of the Yakut eighth month (*axsynyy*); thus, the Yakut *kulun tutar* almost coincides with March. When this was pointed out to them the Yakut

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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themselves wondered, "How it was that in former times the foals were tied and the mares milked so early." At present mares foal in the twelfth month (*mūs ustar*) and even in the first month (*balyk ȳr*), approximately in April or May. The Yakut begin to milk their mares in the first month (*balyk ȳr*). But to clear up these moot points, it should be noted that the names for two more months are known: *atyjax yya* (the month of pitchfork, i.e., of drying hay) and *balahañña kīrār yi* (the month of changing the summer dwelling for the winter house). The Yakut usually say that the first of these two months is the same as *tördünyū* (the fourth), but they are confused concerning the second month. Mr. V. M. Jonov is of the opinion that both names were inserted between the months *ot yya* and *bācinyi*, instead of *tördünyū*, when the month names failed to match the corresponding season. Thus we have a thirteen month year. Jonov found that the Yakut agreed with him in this explanation.[1]

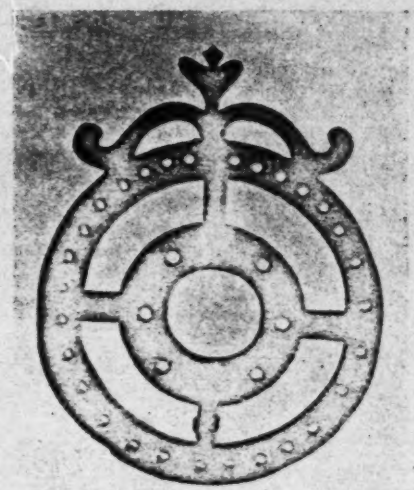

Fig. 1 (70-8818). A Calendar, the Inner Perforations represent the Days of the Week, the Outer Perforations, the Days of the Month.

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After becoming Christians the Yakut no longer followed this method of reckoning time, but oriented themselves by the Christian holidays, for instance: *kirisiāniye* (Russian, *krestcheniye*), baptism, January sixth; *Kiristiāp* (Russian, *Kristov*), Easter: *Orosuospa* (Russian *Rozhdestvo*), Christmas; *bulāstar* (Russian, *Vlasii*), or *ynax tañarata* (cow's holiday), February eleventh. Russians regard Saint Vlasii as the protector of domestic cattle and among the Yakut this saint replaced the female deity, Ayisit, of their old mythology. Among the Yakut are experienced individuals who know the number of days between holidays since it is easier to deal with immovable feasts. For movable festivals, they must often consult their priest. On the wall of every Yakut dwelling is a calendar, usually consisting of a small board with holes corresponding to the number of days in the year.

[1] Jonov, V. M., L'Aigle dans les Croyances Yakoutes (*Publications du Musée d'Anthropologie et d'Ethnographie de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*, vol. 1, pt. 2, no. XVI, pp. 1-28, St.-Pétersbourg, 1913 [In Russian]), 22-23.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933. Yakut

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The immovable feasts are marked by crosses over the holes. A wooden peg is placed in the hole to indicate the current date, thus showing whether it is an ordinary day or a holiday. Fig. 1 shows a circular calendar; the inner circle has seven perforations, corresponding to the seven days of the week. A peg is shown in the hole for Sunday, over which there is a cross. The outer ring has thirty holes. When the month has thirty-one days, the peg is kept in the last hole for two days. If the month has twenty-nine or twenty-eight days, the peg must be transferred to the first day of the next month. The calendar is called *kün ahar*, it counts the days, or *sibaska* (Russian, *svyatzy*, calendar of saints), or *nädiälä asarar mas*, board which shows the week.

The Yakut began to count the month by weeks only after Russianization. Thus, for week, they use the Russian word *nädiälä* (*nedielya*). The days of the week are also known by Russian names:—

Sunday, *tañara künä* (festival day), *boskyrsyanya* (Russian, *voskresenye*), or *nädiälä öjsa* (the dividing day of the week)
Monday, *bädäliänik* (Russian, *ponedelnik*)
Tuesday, *otuornyuk* or *oltuorunyuk* (Russian, *vtornik*)
Wednesday, *särädä* (Russian, *sereda*)
Thursday, *cäppiär* (Russian, *chetverg*)
Friday, *pätiñsä* or *bätiñsä* (Russian, *pyatnitza*)
Saturday, *subälä* (Russian, *subbota*)

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

time. Yakut pots are easily broken and remain porous until milk has been repeatedly boiled in them. The rims, the upper part, and sometimes the whole pot, are ornamented by impressions made with wooden stamps (*kūōs oyūlūr mas*, wood for ornamenting pottery). These design motives have special names; for instance, Fig. 53*d*, is called *tyñyrachtach torduya;* Fig. 53*g* is *biltägir*.

Though pottery-making was known to the Yakut since neolithic times it never developed into a real art. This may be explained partly by their early acquaintance with the manufacture of metals, particularly iron, which among the Yakut preceded that of bronze. Clay vessels came to be used more frequently as containers for liquids than as cooking utensils. However, fluids cannot be kept in them a long time without spoiling. After cooking the pot is cleaned with an iron scraper called *käsïr* (Fig. 48) and dried.

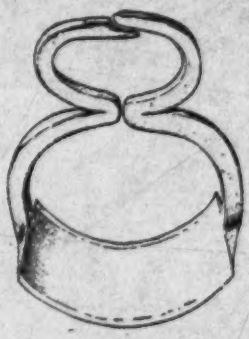

Fig. 48 (70-8775). An Iron Scraper for Clay Cooking Pots.

The forms of clay vessels vary; the commonest is an egg-like shape, the flat bottom of which is much smaller than the mouth. As may be seen from the illustration (Fig. 49*a–d*) the tea pots and charcoal stoves (Fig. 49*a*, *c*) to keep them warm are made after the Russian fashion. The size ranges from small cups for children to vessels capable of holding four to six gallons.

Additional evidence of the antiquity of the industry among the Yakut appears in the Turkic names for pottery-making implements and vessels. A clay pot is called *kūōs;* a metal kettle is called *salyr*. Even in places where, as in the northern districts of Yakut Province, no pottery is made at present, the word *kūōs* is well known and used as a linear measure. In terms of linear measure one may say, "one pot," "two pots," "pot of a walker, horse, or ox rider." For *kūōs* (pot) the Yakut understand a distance of from seven to twelve versts (from 6.6 to 8 miles). Translating *kūōs* in terms of time, it means a period during which a pot with meat for an average family is cooked. In Afghanistan *kūōs* is used as a linear measure of about eighteen miles. Böhtlingk[1] distinguishes the word *kūōs* as a unit of time from *kōs* as a linear measure as does Pekarsky in his Yakut-Russian dictionary, where he interprets *kōs* as a term for a day's journey from one camping place to another.

The Yakut do not know how to wash clay or to temper it, using it as it is found, with all its impurities, quartz and other non-plastic materials

[1] Böhtlingk, *ibid.*

6: Sauer--121-122 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-1-2
116, 805, 821

"The year they call gil, and divide it into four seasons, saas, (spring), soyin (summer), kuisan (autumn), and kisun (winter). A month they call ooi; of these they have [2 in the year, of 30 days, adding a supplemental moon for the deficiency every sixth year. Their months are named as follow: [122]

Besia	Budding month	May
Otti	Hay ditto	June
Ottershachia	Hay forks stacking	July
Tierdinnai	Fourth	August
Bessinnai	Fifth	September
Altidnai	Sixth	October
Settinnai	Seventh	November
Oksinnai	Eighth	December
Tochsinnai	Ninth	January
Ollunnai	Tenth	February
Koluntutor	Stallion	March
Bussustur	Thawing	April

They have no specific name for the supplemental month every sixth year.

6: Sauer--121-122 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-2
116, 805, 821

They know the time of night by the situation of the great bear and the polar star: the former they call araghas solus.

Of the appoaching seasons they judge by the following phenomenon. If the pleiades, which they call oorgel, appear before the moon when seven days old in the month of January, they expect spring to commence in the beginning of April; if when nine days old, at the end of April; but if this happens on the tenth day, they expect a late spring, and begin to be very saving of their fodder."

40: Burr--152 N-2 (no date) 1931 Yakut
116, 221, 805

"Their principal occupations are hunting, fishing and cattle-breeding. They live in wooden huts for the greater part of the year, for the seven winter months which in their tongue are distinguished by numbers instead of names, sure evidence of the sameness of the long frost; but on the arrival of spring they moved into lighter quarters, and in the summer often live in wigwams. These five months have names of their own, signifying the 'dropping of foals,' the 'month of sowing,' 'the harvest,' and so on. Their chief domestic animals are the horse and the reindeer; it is the latter which chiefly supplies them with transport, meat, milk and clothing, but in Vilhuy and some other suitable districts they are occupied in cattle-breeding."

43: Karutz--74 [5] E-2 (no date) 1925 Yakut
116, 237, 805

It is interesting to note that they use a calendar of mammoth bones, a development of the tally.